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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5294  
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2559  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8812  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2177  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7029  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6232  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1477  
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0426  
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3264  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000197

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KOCI](#) [AG](#)  
SUBJECT: ANGRY YOUTHS STIR UP SLEEPY SAHARA TOWN

REF: ALGIERS 110

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Violent protests on February 16 by approximately 100 youths in Timimoun, a sleepy tourist town in the desert of southwest Algeria, raised eyebrows in Algiers, since the majority of socioeconomic protests in Algeria have been confined to the more populous northern strip of the country (reftel). The Timimoun protesters, mostly high school- and university-age males, went on a three-hour rampage February 16, setting fire to state government buildings and shouting they were "fed up" with the lack of opportunity and jobs.

¶2. (C) Columnist Hakim Lalaam of French-language daily Le Soir d'Algerie told us on February 18 that he could not believe "that riots occurred in Timimoun." He noted that the events of February 16 flew in the face of the reputation southern Algerians enjoy as the "most patient and wise" people in the country. Henda Kaidi, a French teacher in Timimoun, told us that the Timimoun of February 16 "had nothing to do with the Timimoun you see in postcards." According to Kaidi, the protesters were not delinquents but came from "la cite des 200 logements," a government housing compound for civil servants. She said that the young protesters were tired of seeing foreign companies "working on their soil" without providing jobs for "the sons of the region" or stimulating the local economy. The few foreign companies present in southwestern Algeria do much of their hiring in the north, particularly for skilled laborers, according to Kaidi. Kaidi claimed that Timimoun has its own local engineers, who are somehow not as attractive to businesses in the region as their northern counterparts.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Frustration over economic stagnation and the lack of jobs does not usually boil over in Saharan oases like Timimoun. Our tracking of socioeconomic protests since November 2007 shows nothing of the nature of the February 16 events occurring in southern Algeria. Although recent press reports announced that gold mines may soon be operable in the area, southwestern Algeria has not traditionally received as much attention as central and southeastern Algeria. Most foreign companies in the arid southern two-thirds of Algeria work in the hydrocarbon sector or extract other natural resources and are largely concentrated in the southeast. The southwest is left with little to offer aside from underdeveloped though attractive tourist destinations like Timimoun.

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